



H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection, January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973

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Monday, April 23.

Ehrlichman and I stayed at Camp David all day today. Worked on the background material for the lawyers and some discussion of strategy regarding leave of absence and so forth. Came down for dinner at home. Ziegler called me early this evening and was obviously in a very emotional state and covered things as follows:

He said well, I have to say that his mind is made up, as far as I can see. It was made up at Grand Cay last night. It's not decided finally, but I think that he's really set. He feels there are no good choices. He returned today from Grand Cay and had a six hour meeting with Rose, Chappy Rose, and Buchanan in the whole session. And the President, at the conclusion, said there are no good choices, and he talked to Ron sort of on the way out and had tears in his eyes. Went out for a boat ride, then came back. Called Ziegler and told him to call me and tell me. Ron thinks he's going in the direction, and he said he had talked to Rogers and others, and he's aiming in the direction, although he says that he's not decided, that there's no choice but for Ehrlichman and Haldeman to move away and above it, in the appropriate way.

He bases this on the argument of three premises that he evaluates. First, the legal standpoint, where he thinks we will survive. Second, public opinion that would probably won't make the case in the long run. There will be-- then he goes into a long dissertation on that, agonizing. Ron says everybody fought it, but something has to be done. The President feels guilt. As President, he must get this out of his mind. He has an obligation to run the nation and he cannot, as a human being, run the country with this on his mind. He told Ziegler he knows what it means, and that's why he's fought it and so on. He told Ziegler to call me and tell me that from the standpoint of the Presidency, and from my own standpoint, I should consider seriously that the President has no alternative and that I should resign and fight this, as I know how to fight it.

Ron said the separability idea was argued at length and the view is that it can't be separated. Ehrlichman and I both have to go. The President said these two men are strong enough to deal with this, to move on their own to make their case. But the Presidency cannot be encumbered by



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it. The points of history, separability, won't go away, anyway, no guilt and so on were all argued, and the President argued the most strongly; then got up and walked out the door. And Ron realized that basically it was done. He's leaned on Rogers heavily. Rogers argued the case the other way, but he thinks this is the right decision.

Then Ron read from his notes as to various things the President said, which is what follows. There's no good way to handle this. It will in no way separate Ehrlichman and Haldeman from me, and this is irrelevant anyway. They did no wrongdoing, but they cannot assume that they will not be in the swirl of controversy. I know now the grand jury won't act for another month. There's no way that this will not go down in history as a very bad chapter with the Presidency seriously hurt, and I must accept responsibility for this. But Haldeman and Ehrlichman are strong men. They have served the Presidency as dedicated a way as any man has served the Presidency. Probably the strongest men in terms of dedication who have ever served the Presidency. But as we look at the political forces, the forces against the Presidency, the country must have a President moving in a direction. He realizes there will be clamor. This will not pass, I'm still involved. Charges and claims are still made that I knew about it and was aware of it. But I must make a decision and move ahead in a new tone and a new way. The best thing I can do is make the decision, but I just can't do it because I can't prejudice their rights. I believe in these two men, I love these two men. The White House can't respond and can't operate with this force against us, though.

Ron says then that after Rose and Buchanan left, the President said, I will face this on my own. I will make these points to the men involved. They have to realize where we are in all this. Ziegler again said he was sure he had decided on this in Grand Cay last night. Ziegler says he raised the question of resignation versus leave of absence. Gave all the arguments. The President said there's no choice, a leave is not a viable choice. They have to make their case and I must separate the Presidency from them. Then they discussed who should talk to Haldeman and who should talk to Ehrlichman. Ziegler raised the point that this would prejudice their legal case. The President said he's convinced we have no legal concern. May not even have a public opinion



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concern. But he then says I am not the type of man who can run this country, and then went into a 20 minute dissertation on the problems of the Middle East and all that. Ziegler said what if they relieve themselves of their duties? The President pointed to his head-- his own head and said, I can't relieve myself of it. Ziegler emphasized this can't be separated from the President. He says, I must go out to the public and say that I can't run the Presidency with this burden. That's why I've accepted this.

He feels the way to do this is for each of us to submit our resignation at our own request. The question of Dean's resignation and how to handle that has to be determined. Ron says he's very concerned about Colson. Told Ziegler he talked to Colson yesterday and had Ziegler call him a couple times today. Then told Ziegler not to talk to him again at all. Said I now know what kind of a man Colson is. He started into the whole "What'll I do now without them" business, and Ziegler said don't talk about that now. The President wants to move immediately. He was going to have Rogers talk to us tomorrow. Then said to Ron, what if Haldeman and Ehrlichman roll him. Ron said they wouldn't try.

The President raised the point about keeping Higby in. Ziegler said I don't think he'd stay. Then Ziegler said, if I stay, I don't know how I'll handle things, and the President was horrified at the thought of Ron leaving, but Ron made the point that he may have to, but Ron said he couldn't in any way replace me. He pushed Kehrl and Parker and all those people as able to take on many of the tasks, and said the President responded favorably to that. In the President's summation, he said he can't separate himself from this, for his true responsibility. He argued a long time about the buffer theory and the lightning rod idea. But said, it doesn't matter. I have to make a decision, I have to make a move, and I have to go on.

I called Larry and told him, which was quite a shock. Also called Ehrlichman, who took it very hard. He thought I ought to call Wilson, the lawyer, which I did. He felt it was a great surprise and will definitely have an effect on the legal case. Said they had discussed this, but had no indication that it was a real possibility. He understands the President's concern, but wonders if



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this is the right way to handle it. I called Ehrlichman back to report on that. He said he was having a very hard time with this. I said, why? He said it seems unfair. Which, of course, it does.

I made a long speech to Ziegler, a medium one to Larry, and a short one to John, on the need to treat this as a progressive step and approach it on that basis, recognizing that each step takes us ahead in some way, even though we don't perceive that at the time. Ron was obviously flabbergasted by my reaction and the way I tried to deal with him and strengthen him, and he kept saying that someday he wanted to tell me what he really thought of me or something. It's obviously very hard on him, because he's had to take all the long sessions over the weekend, plus delivering the final news which must have been very rough to face up to, but he did it very well. Larry called back later to say he would be happy to do anything he could to help and so on. Obviously disturbed, and we'll see where it goes from there.

End of April 23.